

The Three Essentials for the 21st Century

Educating the Heart, Mind and Body



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Are we ready to re-envision our learners and rethink their education? Our job is not to prepare our children for an unknown future; it is to believe in their potential and act so they can create the future they desire. The children don't belong to the future; the future belongs to the children. Preparing the creators of the future starts with an internal shift in the adults' mindset.

I believe that education must align every child's potential, developmental needs, and dreams with their talents and abilities. It must focus on the processes of learning over outcomes as well as nurture each child's unique competencies, skills, and pace of growth. Finally, it must foster holistic student learning and expression in academic, social-emotional, artistic, and essential life skills. Like a gardener appreciates every seed's unique qualities, needs, growth, and contributions, we too must cultivate a similar approach to value every child.

We must focus on fostering an understanding of interdependence and responsibility to nurture our children as individuals, but not make them individualistic. Together, we must endeavour to raise a new generation of change-makers who don't intend to confront the hostile and unjust world, rather we must entrust them with the task of building a kinder, more peaceful, and compassionate world for all. We must prepare them to translate the opportunities that are ripe in the present context into mindful actionable programs as well as plan for a robust and sustainable future to create multi-generational impact.

I believe that today's learners require an education system and learning environment which enhances creativity and engagement rather than conformity and compliance. The shift we need is from a seeker's mindset to a creator's mindset. As such, re-envisioning education must begin with an internal shift in the mindset of policymakers, educators, and parents. The education system of the post-industrial era was designed to suit a system instead of a learner.

However, a thriving learning ecosystem would effectively integrate the three essentials of educating the heart, mind, and body. The New Education Policy 2020 is a step in the right direction towards such nurturance. Its rootedness in the rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian thought of pursuit of knowledge (jnan), wisdom (pragyaa), and truth (satya) being the highest human goal which is supported by modern-day technological developments strongly resonates in my envisioned educational model for Arunachal Pradesh.

I believe that children are like tiny seeds with immeasurable potential to grow into healthy, thriving, and abundant trees. Thus, our educational model must place the child at the centre, and through right nurturance and a conducive environment, let the child's potential emerge from within. As educa-

tors, we must play the role of gardeners as opposed to carpenters.

We must believe that each child is unique in their individual talents and nurture them as such. They are not something an adult carves or shapes, like a log of dead wood which is transformed into a desirable artefact by a skilled carpenter. Fostering a gardener's mindset to educate the heart, mind, and body of each child through a learn, reflect, and engage pedagogy would enable our children to cultivate compassion to nurture, wisdom to guide, and skill to serve. Such a compassion, wisdom, and service-oriented educational approach would equip children with skills to create an equitable and sustainable future for themselves and others. To achieve this goal, our education needs to go beyond schooling and siloes of academic, extra-curricular, vocational, life skills, or social-emotional learning. Given the rapid postliberalization growth, climate change, and a pandemic that brought humanity to a standstill, fostering adaptability, resilience, and human-centric skills are the need of the hour. All these skills must be interwoven to raise conscious, responsible, and capable human beings.

Such preparation necessitates us—the adults—to be willing to unlearn and relearn first. Simply incorporating skill-building or social-emotional programs as extra-curricular activities is not enough. Learning must give mainstream emphasis and time to foster a diverse range of skills to enable children to create the future they desire. Our New Education Policy 2020 has broadly mapped out how such interconnected learning can be achieved. Now we must develop curricula to translate it into action.

Furthermore, simply reimagining curricula that accommodate the three essentials of educating the heart, mind, and body as well as the diverse learning styles of all children is not enough to meet the educational needs of all learners. We also need to imagine a new generation of learning spaces which can support our learners and educators to engage with and deliver progressive curricula.

To my mind, the new generation learning spaces must include the following aspects:

Utility

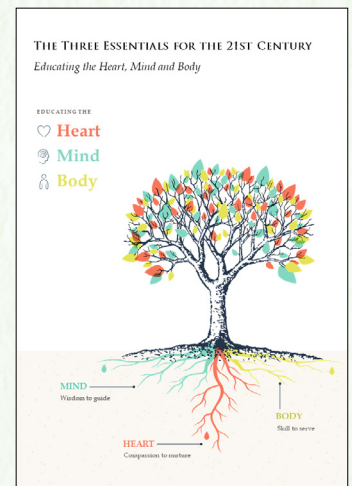
Be adaptable, spacious, and flexible learning spaces, designed for efficient access, and which can respond to the needs of all learners, educators as well as the evolving technologies needed to fulfil the present and future needs of our learners.

Wellbeing

The design of the reimagined learning spaces must be comfortable, safe, and healthy for children, while stimulating their emotional wellbeing.

Significance

Research has shown that when a physical learning space embodies its 'inherent pedagogy,' the cultural, psychological, and



behavioural attributes of the physical space shape both the learning and the teaching. Envisioning our learning spaces to manifest our values, as was the case in generations past, would inspire learners to imbibe these principles.

When the design of our learning spaces is inherently suited to enhance the educational experience of all learners, it would allow learners to make choices and experiment with learning techniques to ultimately discover how they learn best and where their true passions lie. It would equip educators with a greater capacity to effectively respond to the diverse learning

needs of their learners.

Last but not the least, the Covid-19 pandemic lay bare the existing fault lines within the educational system and reinforced the importance of technology in narrowing the longstanding gaps, disparities, and inequities. I envision a Classroom 2.0 which would pair humans and technology, and enable parents, educators, and policy makers to reimagine and rethink the design and development of digital infrastructures to achieve inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.